

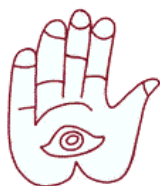
HAUNTED INDIANAPOLIS

And

Other Indiana Ghost Stories

SPECIAL BOOK PREVIEW

**Master storyteller, Tom Baker and ghost investigator Jonathan
Titchenal relate over twenty-five haunting tales!
Experience torment, terror, and genuine chills!**



Zem Books
Marion, Indiana

NOTE: This Special Preview of *Haunted Indianapolis and Other Indiana Ghost Stories* by Tom Baker and John Tichenal is given here freely by the author as a special promotion. Feel free to download, print, and distribute this special excerpt at will.

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Scratches

Marion, Indiana is a quiet, sober town that some would say has seen better days. With the closure of several factories, and an increasing tide of unemployment, the residents of Marion, as of late, have found themselves hanging onto hope with a bitter determination that one day they will be able to see their small city rise again and reclaim its former glory.

However, while presently jobs in Marion may have grown scarce, it has never in its long history had a shortage of churches. Most varieties of Christianity are represented in Marion (which has the distinction of being the birthplace, oddly enough, of "rebel" movie actor James Dean), and the populace is overwhelmingly conservative in religious appetite as well as political philosophy.

The Wesleyan denomination predominates, if for no other reason than the single fact that Indiana Wesleyan University has its campus headquartered nearly on the outskirts of town. Although you will certainly find Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Mormons, Pentecostals, Mennonites, Seventh Day Adventists, a smattering of Spiritualists, and even a few displaced Pagans, as well as a handful of Jewish families, the Wesleyans and Baptists have it.

Thus, Sunday services are well-attended events, marking not only the passing of weeks into months, and months into years, but also allowing folks a reprieve to join in fellowship once a week with like-minded people. It may not be Big City Thrills, but it's mighty homey.

It was during just such a Sunday service, when the Pastor (We'll call him Reverend Trask), finished his sermon with a soft prayer, said the Benediction, and walked from the pulpit to the front door to shake hands with his parishioners as they filed out.

As the last of the parishioners left the comfort and sanctuary of the old church, he noticed a peculiar woman standing in the foyer. She was wearing a respectable blue dress, carrying a handbag, and looking for all the world as if she had just lost her

oldest and dearest friend.

Soon the congregation had all departed, and the minister was left alone in the outer vestibule with the woman. She approached him, a little cautiously, and then held out her hand, saying: "Hello. I know you don't know me...but I have no where else to turn."

She instantly broke down sobbing, and the minister drew her close, putting his hand on her arm and telling her, "We can speak in my office, if you like. Just follow me."

They went into his office, and he closed the door behind him, sitting down heavily behind his desk. Although watching over his flock sometimes was a tiring duty, he never failed to appreciate their wants and concerns. His was a twenty-four hour position, but he did his utmost to fill it to the best of his ability.

The woman wiped her eyes with a handkerchief, and then said, in a trembling voice: "Pastor, it's my husband. Something is wrong with him...I can't explain it. He won't sleep, he won't eat. He barely speaks to me anymore. And last night he woke me up out of a sound sleep, growling something about hearing strange voices and scratches in the room. Well, I listened, and I couldn't hear anything. But this morning, as I lay in bed, I could feel the most oppressive sense of...of evil that I have ever felt in my life. I am not a religious person at all. I've never even been here before, as a matter of fact, and my husband says he doesn't even believe in God. I had to get out of that house today, so I went for a drive, and when I came by here, and saw all the cars outside, something just told me that I should come and talk to you."

The minister sat back in his chair and closed his eyes to mere slits. He was not sure what the problem here was, if it was spiritual or something more mundane that young married people were apt to go through from time to time. It could even be, reckoned, that the husband or wife were in serious need of psychiatric counseling.

He said, "How would you like me to help you?"

"Could you see him, Reverend? Perhaps come and talk to him? Could you bless our home?"

The Reverend told her, immediately, that he could. As they rode out of town toward the home, the woman filled him in on some of the strange phenomenon that had been occurring ever since they had left their former home and moved into the renovated farmhouse. She related a litany of strange, creeping surprises that had foisted themselves upon the family only weeks after they had moved out of their former home.

At first, it had been only small things: at night, while lying in bed next to her husband, the woman swore that she could hear footsteps on the stairs, or rustling around below, in the living room. She would lay awake in a state of abject fear, too scared to even move, her breath gasping in and out. Her husband, a heavy sleeper, usually simply rolled over and murmured to himself.

She might grab his arm, if the noises got to be too loud. Invariably, when he awoke, with a sort of grumbling irritation, he would simply snort with his eyes still closed.

"Mice. I'll get some traps tomorrow, honey. Go back to sleep."

But the noises in the night grew louder, more frequent, until even he couldn't ignore or put them off any longer. Loud, ringing footsteps often awoke them from a dead sleep, and her husband would bound from the bed with his gun, throw open the bedroom door, and rush out to the top of the stairs. Always, they were dark and empty, betraying no hint of an intruder.

It was then that objects began to mysteriously vanish and reappear in odd places: keys, books, small trinkets would disappear and somehow find themselves in the most unlikely of places. Once, while they were both comfortably ensconced in front of the fireplace, an entire heavy chest of china plates came crashing over onto the kitchen floor. The couple rushed into the room, dodging flying dishes and shards of glass as they whipped crazily around the room, some becoming embedded in the wooden door.

The house would tremble with savage blows, like the thudding fall of heavy stones, and the temperature would veer wildly between boiling hot and freezing cold, sometimes within the same

room. And then there were the scratches.

It was as if several small, feral animals were hiding in the walls, scrabbling across the ceiling with sharp little claws. At first, her husband had tried to dismiss it as simply "mice", and even suggested that squirrels may have built a nest in the roof. He shrugged off any occurrence he couldn't explain; he didn't understand it, he claimed, and what he didn't understand, he didn't want to know about.

He had been eating breakfast one morning, and she had been brewing coffee, when suddenly she turned to see him duck instantly down. He picked his head up again gasping, and looked behind him.

There was a deadly sharp kitchen knife embedded in the wall behind him, its handle still vibrating gently from the force of its projection. He had just narrowly missed having that knife thrust by invisible hand directly into his face.

Just at that moment, as his wife stood there looking aghast at what had just happened, the coffee pot seemingly erupted on the burner, shooting a spray of scalding water. If she had not jumped backward instinctively, she would have been badly burned.

Suddenly, a deafening crash erupted through the living room, as books and trinkets began to fly from the shelves of a large oak case. The case itself had scooted out from the wall, and was suddenly thrust down onto the floor, cracking a portion of its surface. The woman was left in a state of near-shock, and finally refused to be left alone in the house during the day. Her husband seemed baffled about the ominous doings, yet admitted he was still unwilling to move. He, nonetheless, permitted her to accompany him to town each morning, and she whiled away the hours while he was at work visiting shops or reading in the public library.

When the time came for both of them to finally return home in the evening, she felt a knot of fear and loathing curl itself around in the pit of her stomach. The couple would somewhat hesitantly enter, and she would hurry to warm some food for

them, keeping her fingers crossed that finally, everything would calm down to a sense of normality. They would then sit sullenly at the dining room table, expecting at any moment some outrageous spectacle, and finally retiring, uneasily, with the comforting hum of the radio tuned to pleasant music in an effort to block out the strange scratching.

As they pulled up in front old place, Reverend Trask clutched his Bible tightly in his right hand. The woman continued:

"Every once in a great while, in the night, we would feel something tugging at the covers on the bed. And then there was the night they were pulled completely back, and then pulled off the bed and flung into a corner. I thought that the objects flying through the air were the worst of it, but then a few nights ago, Jack woke me up complaining that something had attacked him while we were sleeping. He showed me scratches on his shirt--"

"Scratches? You mean the thing actually, well, clawed him?"

"Yes," she replied, turning off the car and sitting still for a moment. "And more than once. The same thing happened last night. He said something with glowing eyes came out of the darkness at him. He said it grabbed him while he lay there, too scared to move. I was so exhausted I noticed nothing, but the next thing I know he's out of bed and standing by the window, holding his pistol. Then..."

Her voice fell to stillness.

"He shot it? My God, you could have been killed. He must have been dreaming."

"Oh no. No Sir, he was wide awake and scared out of his mind. We've been married for ten years, and in all that time I've never seen him like this. All he's done for the past two days is lay in bed, looking sick. He says he can feel something fighting for him...fighting for his soul."

She suddenly broke down weeping, and he tried to console her as best he could, but finally stated: "Well, that's not going to help at this point. It's in God's hands now."

As they walked up the drive toward the ramshackle old place,

Reverend Trask couldn't help but feel a sense of the boring normality of the exterior. It looked like many older two-story country homes, with a whitewashed exterior, a slightly-sagging porch, and an air of homespun gentility. Upon stepping onto the porch, in the comfortable glare of early-afternoon sunshine, he almost decided that the real problem here wasn't any menacing, inexplicable force, but was simply the strain and pressure of marital life driving these young people to conjure up phantasmal evil where none existed. It was, after all, damned hard to be frightened of phantom callers on a bright Sunday afternoon.

If he for an instant thought her claims to be dubious, however, as soon as she opened the door and he stepped foot inside that gloomy old edifice, he realized that, indeed, there was something here that lent itself to creeping unease.

The living room was spacious, and the house itself looked quite nice and tidy. Altogether, as the eye took in the overall surroundings at a glance, it looked like any normal abode of a moderately well-off couple. However, as Reverend Trask followed the woman up the stairs and down the hall into the bedroom, he experienced a cold, clammy feeling steal over him, a sort of mysterious anxiety, and a terrible sadness and suffocation of the spirit. Quite before he set foot into the bedroom, he was choking back a sob of melancholy.

Before him, sitting on the edge of the bed, holding his head in his hands was a very haggard looking younger man still dressed in his pajamas. At the sound of the Reverend entering, the man jerked his head upward, revealing the general appearance of a man who had been losing a lot of sleep; a man that was, perhaps, on the verge of succumbing to a nervous breakdown.

"Pastor, you have to help me. There is a demon that's been attacking me in the night...I tried to shoot it, but you can't kill it. It clawed me across the chest in my sleep!"

With that the man raised his shirt, revealing four jagged cuts, as if an animal had raked its claws across the man's stomach.

Under ordinary circumstances, Reverend Trask might have

assumed he was merely dealing with a psychologically disturbed man. However, as he stood in the gloom of the bedroom, looking down at the man, Reverend Trask knew that something of a spiritual, perhaps even supernatural nature might indeed be occurring.

The man suddenly bounded from the bed, looking more alert than he had when Reverend Trask had first entered. He went to the far wall, pointing at the bullet hole he had shot through it last night.

"It started with the footsteps, and the scratching in the walls. Then objects flying around everywhere, and furniture being moved while we were gone. Then, several nights ago, I saw a black form hovering over my bed. I thought I was still dreaming, but my eyes were wide awake, and I couldn't move. Last night, it tried to kill me..."

Reverend Trask asked the man if he had any faith. Receiving "no" as a reply, he asked the man to sit with him and pray for the release of his home from the grip of whatever low spirit had taken hold there. However, upon kneeling, he soon found himself choking on his words, his mind a sudden cold, biting frost of fear and panic.

"We should be gone from here," said the man, holding his stomach as if, suddenly, it had been gripped by a sharp pain. Reverend Trask got to his feet, clutching his Bible closely, and said: "I think that you may be right. I don't feel like I can stay here in your home much longer. Would you be averse to coming back to the church with me?"

"Why?" asked the man, puzzled. "What good can we do there, when the problem is here?"

As if in answer to this question, Reverend Trask suddenly pointed to the man's shirt. The front of his white night shirt had suddenly began to darken with wet blood, and the Reverend suddenly leaned over and pulled the mans now sticky shirt front up.

A new series of deep claw marks had appeared upon his chest,

and blood was trickling down the front of his shirt in lazy rivulets. Both men were too astounded to speak, and the Reverend felt, for the first time in years, a true, deep sense of spiritual danger, the likes of which was threatening to shake from him every last ounce of his spiritual fortitude. He said, "I have to leave, Sir. Begging your pardon, but I must insist on seeing both you and your wife in the presence of several of the brothers of our congregation. You see, I've heard of this sort of thing before, never believed I would see it first hand, though. It would be advisable to have a few others present, to assist if there is any danger."

"What are you talking about? What's going on here?" The man, suddenly, seemed to be on the verge of losing his stability. He wiped his hand across his bloody chest, stood on trembling legs, and walked from the bedroom as his wife was just coming up from below. He brushed past her, going into the bathroom and slamming the door.

"See if you can talk some sense into him. And be very careful. I would suggest you find somewhere else to stay for the time being. If you need anything, anything at all, do not hesitate to contact me. My prayers will be with you."

The wife looked as distressed as any woman he had ever seen, and he felt deeply troubled for her as he walked out the front door and shakily got into his car, driving away and not even daring to look back over his shoulder.

He felt very happy to be leaving that damnable house, too.

That evening he spent the night in fervid prayer, not breathing a word of what had happened to his own wife, but carrying the memory of that ghastly coldness and malignant evil into sleep with him.

He felt a deep sense of guilt, for he made no plans whatsoever to check back with the family. He couldn't. That small experience had shaken his faith to its very core, and as he grappled with the failure of his religion, he did his best to bury the memory as one would a bad dream. His phone remained silent, and no messages were left for him for nearly two weeks.

Then, finally, as if the terror had just been toying with him, he awoke one sober morning, his wife still laying beside him, curled up and blissfully unaware. He looked out the window at the trickle of gray, early morning rain, and knew that today would be the day.

Sure enough, when he came home for lunch, having gone calling on elderly parishioners all that morning, his wife announced that a woman had called earlier that morning, leaving a message concerning her husband's illness. He had almost managed to slip the strange sense of gloom that had settled over him all day, but now, deep inside, he felt the icy claws of alien terror seize the back of his neck. He quickly sorted through his mental Rolodex, turning over in his mind who he might be able to contact that might be of help later this evening. He then dialed the number the woman had left with trembling fingers, and stilled his nervousness when her voice finally answered on the other end.

To the surprise of Reverend Trask, the woman was currently at the hospital, her husband having been admitted due to illness and nervous exhaustion. Apparently, since last they met, the husband had become increasingly despondent and unresponsive, and had become unable to keep any food down. Doctors attributed this to a mild flu, and to the aforementioned "nervous exhaustion". The scratches they attributed to psychological disturbance, and had insisted he be hospitalized for observation.

"You mean, they think that he is doing it to himself?"

"Oh yes," the wife replied. "They think he's gone off the deep end, and they want to commit him to a sanitarium, I think."

"And what of the disturbances? Have they continued?"

She sounded a little morose when she replied. "Yes, but they seemed to settle down some, the worse he got. There were still strange footsteps, heavy breathing, and things flying through the air. Things would disappear, and you could hear clawing along the walls, same as always. We left several days ago, to stay in a hotel, and then stay with friends, but we couldn't really explain to anyone what was happening, and we couldn't really believe it ourselves. Then, day before yesterday, the scratches returned, and

he started getting very ill, vomiting and crying out that something was attacking him. I-I didn't know what to do, so I called an ambulance. He's sleeping now."

"Do you think we could take him out for a little while tonight?"

She said, hesitantly: "He's very sedated, but I think he can get around. If you can convince the doctors to sign him out, I'm sure he'd go."

"If anyone can convince them, I can. Don't worry about that. I'll be there in just a short while."

He hung up the phone, and then instructed his wife to keep a plate in the oven for him. She protested mildly, but realizing the nature of his work and always trusting his judgment, she did as he asked. He went upstairs to change into a fresh suit, found his briefcase, and set out just as the sun started dipping low behind the overhanging trees in the backyard.

He first went to the home of one of his most loyal parishioners, and implored the man to meet him at the church in a quarter of an hour. The man replied that he most certainly would, and would even bring his son-in-law along. Reverend Trask then hopped back in his car and sped to the hospital.

Upon entering, he was met by the wife, who looked gravely ill from lack of sleep and sheer worry. "He's just awoken, but he's heavily doped. Follow me."

She led him to the elevator and up into the general wards. As he walked into the room, he found himself aghast at the sight he beheld. The man seemed to have literally shrunk inward since last he had seen him. He was deathly pale, had lost weight, and his haggard visage bore testament to the increasingly harrowing ordeal he had suffered over the past several weeks. Also, his arms had been bandaged to hide, the Reverend supposed, the ever accumulating wounds that seemingly appeared on this man as if in some bizarre mockery of the stigmata suffered by some pious Catholics.

He walked to the man's bedside and held out his hand. The

man looked over at him groggily.

Help me, his bleary eyes seemed to implore. Reverend Trask intended to do just that.

He took the man's hand for a moment, squeezed, and then went to find a doctor. It took some convincing on the part of the Reverend, but finally the man's doctor was located at home. Although he at first seemed reluctant, there was nothing, specifically, he objected to about having his patient go out to the church for a "spiritual healing". The Reverend wasted no small amount of time in getting to the chapel, anxiously waiting for the gentleman he had already made arrangements with to come and assist. Then he solemnly took a few moments to kneel down at his desk, and solemnly prayed to his God that everything should turn out well, they should be successful, and whatever evil had managed to attach itself to this family should be driven out and depart.

When his assistant finally arrived, they talked for awhile over coffee concerning what to expect, all the while feeling a greater sense of trepidation grow in the gloom of the basement office. They all knelt, and again prayed before going upstairs, past the wall-sized mural of Jesus emerging from his tomb, which shone out in heavy colors in the gloom.

They had only waited for a few moments, when the outer door of the sanctuary opened, and in came the wife, leading her obviously-ill husband beside her as if her were an aged invalid. The man looked, in the subdued light of the church sanctuary, like some impoverished mendicant come to offer penance. He sat down on the front pew heavily, his eyes looking drained, and apprehension settling on his face.

Reverend Trask stood in front of the pulpit for a moment, with his hands clasped over his Bible. His two assistants flanked him on either side, and he looked down at the man, saying: "Well, it looks like the only thing left to do is put it in God's hands. Do you agree?"

The man looked at him for a moment, and his eyes seemed to

reflect all the misery and torment in the world. Then his jaw hardened into bitter resolve, and he croaked, tearfully, "Reverend, I don't believe in God."

"So I understand. However, I think that if you stop and consider all that has happened to you, you could afford, for a few moments, to entertain the possibility that there is something beyond the ability of our rational minds to understand..."

He trailed off, and suddenly he motioned for the man's wife to stand and move out of the way. The three men circled him where he sat, and began to murmur prayers, bending over and laying hands upon his shoulders. They at first started as a general whisper, but their voices shortly became a fervent drone, their exhortations for mercy and intervention on behalf of God rising in pitch as the man seated below them began to tremble.

Suddenly, he jerked away from them, falling to the floor and writhing as if he were having a seizure. The men with Reverend Trask stalled for a moment, drawing back as if unsure of their own faith, or of what to do when confronted with such a crisis. However, it was not long before they got to the floor, holding the man's arms down as Reverend Trask began to solemnly intone:

"In the name of Jesus Christ, the Lamb slain for the sins of the world, we command you, Satan, to leave this man and his wife alone!"

"Shut up! Shut up, you damned old fool!"

The man let loose with a string of profanities, and the men holding him were awed at the sudden immense strength he seemed to be exhibiting. It was all both of them could do to keep him from springing forward and running out the door.

The man squirmed, and one of the men holding him put his knee on his shoulder, holding him down as the Reverend continued to put his hand on the man's forehead. The man spat up a vile froth of greenish phlegm, and suddenly one of the men remarked how cold it had grown.

Indeed, suddenly, the men could see their breath blow misty in the air, and felt the freezing onrush of pure evil surround them.

Reverend Trask continued his imprecations before God.

Suddenly:

"What's your name?"

"That's none of your damn business!"

The vile language erupted from the man's mouth in a hideous, deep growl that was not his own. His eyes rolled upward into his head, and a vile stink began to erupt from his body. The men realized, as they held him, that he was bleeding from a variety of puzzling wounds.

The man's wife stood crying, her hand over her mouth, her body trembling. She looked, all of the sudden, like all the pressure and oppression of the last few weeks was draining out of her at once. She seemed as if she was on the verge of collapse.

The lights in the sanctuary began to flicker, as if the power were under an incredible strain, and suddenly, the men began to hear a heavy pounding coming from downstairs. It sounded like something below, in the basement, was threatening to knock the building down.

I command you, in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the Most High God, to tell me your name!"

The man thrashed about again, and suddenly broke free from those holding him. He dove forward, as if he was thrust from behind, and then collapsed across the altar suddenly in exhaustion. He was gasping heavily for air.

Instantly, as if someone had fired a cannon downstairs, the men heard a loud report. The stench was now abominable, as if they were standing amid the ruins of a slaughterhouse sewer. Then, with the blowing of a gentle breeze, as if from nowhere, it dissipated.

The lights in the sanctuary ceased to flicker, and the three men drew heavy, gusty sighs. Reverend Trask went forward to look at the crumpled figure on the pulpit floor. The man before him sat up, shaking badly, looking as if he had just been ridden to the brink of madness by some sadistic fiend. But his eyes were clear, and he had no memory of how he had come to be sitting in the

church, surrounded by his wife, the Reverend, and two strangers.

Also, amazingly, though his clothes were still covered in spots of blood, and the men that had been restraining him all bore evidence of bloodstains on their hands and clothing, they could find no sign whatsoever of a single mark or wound on the man's body.

His scratches had healed without leaving even a slight scar.

Reverend Trask swore his two assistants to secrecy in the matter, not wanting to cause the young couple any sort of embarrassment. Although the disturbances did return, for a short time, they were a mere pale imitation of what they had been; they were no longer severe, nor did they adversely effect the daily lives of the man and his wife. They kept their house, and raised their children there.

The man himself never again experienced strange scratches or wounds of any kind, nor did he again suffer from the heavy melancholy and bizarre fugue that had been caused, presumably, by the offending spirit that had attached itself like a parasite to his mind. He and his wife became avid churchgoers, parishioners of Reverend Trask, and ended up raising a large family in the very same house that they had once considered evil.

Return of the Gipper

George Gipp was a large, seemingly feckless young man who never properly graduated from high school. Yet, he lives on , today , in the memory of millions of football fans that remember him, chiefly, as the legendary "Gipper", the athletic phenomenon that featured as the subject of the classic American movie *Knute Rockne: All American* , starring the late President Ronald Reagan.

George was, by all accounts, an unruly boy who spent his days playing pool in seedy dives, and wondering what in the world he was going to do with the rest of his life. He had always been a great athlete, excelling in baseball while merely sliding through his classes by managing to do as little actual academic work as possible. In that sense, he was not unlike millions of other boys

of his age, who gravitate to rough games and shirk school as being somehow "for sissies".

George's life, however, was to take a radical turn, for it was not long after high school that the young idler chanced upon an encounter with an old friend, an individual that had graduated from Notre Dame University in Indiana, and was now playing in the semi-professional leagues. Knowing full well Georges' physical prowess, this man suggested he apply to Notre Dame for a baseball scholarship. Although , at first, the young man was reticent to leave his carefree lifestyle, he was eventually persuaded to board a train to Elkhart, a train that would eventually lead him to Notre Dame and national acclaim.

George was ensconced at Washington Hall, a dormitory presided over by Catholic Brothers, and loafed his way through classes in his first semester. Feeling like a fish out of water due to his slightly older age, George exhibited the same lethargic "devil may care" attitude that he had at home in Michigan, the attitude that had soured his last years in high school, assuring a poor academic performance.

It was one day, while playing football with some friends, he was noticed by none other than the fabled Knute Rockne, football coach for the Fighting Irish. Rockne immediately knew talent when he saw it, and, approaching the young man, asked him if he had ever played high school football.

"No, baseball is my game."

"Put on a uniform tomorrow and come out with the football scrubs. I think you'll make a great player."

Gipp, not particularly fond of football, did as he was instructed, and went out the next day to try out for the Fighting Irish. It quickly became apparent to all involved that he was an electrifying, masterful player , who seemed born to the pantheon of gridiron gods.

It was four sterling years for college football, and George "The Gipper" Gipp lead his team to twenty consecutive victories and two Western Championships, playing both offense and defense,

and his name quickly became a byword for athletic excellence and rugged, sportsmanlike struggle. It was all too much for the young man from Michigan, and his meteoric rise to college football greatness spurred his not-inconsiderable ego and his brash demeanor to new heights.

He ruffled the feathers of Brother Maurilius, who oversaw the boys dormitory where Gipp was living. One night, when Gipp had failed to return before curfew from a night on the town, Brother Maurilius confronted him, telling him that it was the last time he would flagrantly violate the rules. Brother Maurilius threatened young George with disciplinary actions, actions that would, most certainly, disqualify him from participating in the school sports program. The Gipper was horrified, and was careful to come back to the dorm before curfew afterwards. He was so leery of the threats issued by Brother Maurilius that one weekend night, coming home from a party, he was aghast to realize the he was, most definitely, going to be late. It was only a few minutes to midnight, and he knew that once he got there, the doors would be locked, and all he could do to get inside would be to wake Brother Maurilius, who would be furious. Maurilius would , almost certainly, write him up for disciplinary suspension, and his football playing would be over.

It was a chilly night, but not so chilly that George Gipp was willing to risk the wrath of Brother Maurilius. Instead, he slept that night on the steps of Washington Hall. According to legend, this is what occasioned the illness that was to later rob college football of one of its all-time heroes.

Gipp began to develop a sore throat and cough, and, in time, it was discovered that he had pneumonia. Although he struggled on practicing for a short while, Rockne quickly forced the young man to see a doctor. It was only a short amount of time later that his condition worsened.

It was in November of 1920 that George Gipp , after leading his team in a winning game against Northwestern University, finally became too ill to continue to play. Admitted to St. Joseph's

Hospital, Gipp lingered on in a miserable condition while reporters and sports fans waited with baited breath for news of his recovery. Alas, it was not meant to be.

By December 12 of 1920, the man was literally, on the edge of death. His family and coach was summoned, and George motioned Rockne to his side, telling him, "I've got to go , Rock. It's all right. I'm not afraid. Some time Rock, when the team's up against it, when things are wrong and the breaks are beating the boys--tell them to go in there with all they've got and win one for the Gipper. I don't know where I'll be then Rock, but I'll know about it and I'll be happy."

It was two days later that George "The Gipper" Gipp died. He was laid to rest on December 17th , 1920, in a funeral attended by the entire student body and a multitude of fans, family, friends, and supporters. It was truly a milestone in the history of Notre Dame, and a time of great grief for many people. Gipp was only twenty-five years old at the time of death.

Meanwhile , life at Washington Hall resumed much as it has before George Gipp ever set foot within. However, it was only a short time later that strange reports began to surface from some of the students, reports of the bizarre sound of musical instruments that seemingly played themselves, and the unearthly groan that seemed to creep across the corridors of Washington Hall in the dead of night.

Trumpeter Jim Clancy, late one night when he was practicing in the band room, was astonished that, when he stopped playing, he could still hear a bizarre sound coming from a corner of the room. It sounded like grunting, and, upon approaching the corner, he was shocked to find that, even though it sat lonely on the floor with no one manipulating it, the great tuba apparently had taken a mind of its own and was now playing itself!

This was enough to convince the young man that something strange was afoot, and he quickly got himself out of the there. At first he told no one of his strange experience, fearing correctly that he wouldn't be believed, but it was only a short time later that

other students began to have their own encounters with the eerie noises, and not a few of them were present when doors slammed of their own accord, footsteps and weird groaning came echoing down the halls, and personal items would disappear and reappear in the strangest places and under the oddest of circumstances.

It was all too much for Brother Marsilius , who did what he could to quell an outbreak he saw as nothing more than juvenile pranks and "mass hysteria". But still the strange footsteps and weird happenings continued, and progressed.

One incident, recounted in Mark Merriman's excellent book, *School Spirits* , has the ghost of George Gipp riding a phantom steed up the steps of Washington Hall, and disappearing through the doorway! While we concede that spirits may have actually been involved in this puzzling scenario, we cannot altogether be sure exactly what spirits and where they were purchased or consumed.

Even Brother Marsilius had to admit himself baffled when, one night while lying in bed he heard a horrific sound that was "somewhere between a crash and an explosion". Running in panic from his room, he went out onto the landing, looking wildly around for some explanation for the noise that had just awakened him from sleep. Of course, in the entire building there was found nothing to account for the strange sounds, nor was any explanation forthcoming, except that several students, disdainful of Brother Marsilius' disbelief, had conspired to play a late night gag at his expense. .

Due to the strange, carnivalesque atmosphere the place acquired during those first heady days of the discovery, a skeptical professor led a contingent of eager pupils to spend the night in the old band room, to try and ferret out if there was actually any truth to the rumors being told. It was not long before the professor and his group of young adventurers settled down for the night, however, that one of them was, apparently, tossed from his folding cot by unseen hands. Immediately after this, a bizarre glowing eminence was said to be seen , briefly, in a corner of the room. This was accompanied by wailing, and such a traumatic

feeling of unease that the little group found themselves unable to continue with the experiment, and departed in fright that night.

Of course, after Brother Marsilius' own experience, he clamored to his superiors and demanded that something be done. An exorcism was surely called for, but, whether or not one was ever actually performed by any member of the Order of the Holy Cross is strictly a matter of conjecture. If one was performed, however, it seems not to have been overwhelmingly successful.

Over the decades, a steady stream of reports have continued to emerge from those who have set foot and lingered in the creaky old passageways of Washington Hall. Students have reported the same wailing moans, cold spots, the slamming of doors by invisible hands, and the same strange feelings of being ogled or watched, year after year. One man claimed to have felt the ghost touch his shoulder as he walked upstairs, while another has spoken of the bizarre, misty illumination that sometimes lingers too long in the darkness.

Has "The Gipper" come home from beyond the grave, to walk like a prisoner through the dark corridors of Washington Hall, year after year, decade after decade, quietly watching over the comings and goings of those who are young and filled with the energy and promise of a life he can never again know?

Who knows? However, what is for certain is that Washington Hall is never fully empty. When spring gives way to summer, and students begin filing out to experience youth and life and love in their own way, there is a lingering energy they leave behind. And it is that energy, embodied in the sum total of all of our fears of the unknown, that gives life to tales and experiences such as these.

The Faceless Nun

Foley Hall was a great stone edifice that dated back to 1860, when St. Mary of the Woods College in Terre Haute was first founded in the wilds of Central Indiana by nuns that had journeyed from France to found a religious commune in the wooded areas of the New World. Though the idea of religious

and educational instruction strictly for women must have seemed strange to the rugged settlers that pioneered Indiana territory , the Sisters struggled for decades, until they became a viable and bustling religious community and a cultural center amid the rough hewn prairie people.

The story of the "Faceless Nun" is a legend that goes far back in the history of the school. The story is simple , yet elegant and poignant.

There was once a young nun at St. Mary's whose greatest pleasure was in painting. She diligently studied art ,and her ability to transmit an image to canvass was unparalleled. Thus, it was not long before she was teaching art classes at the school herself, delighting the sisters with portraits of them as they went about their daily activities and chores.

So accomplished an artist was she that it was, finally suggested that she make the next logical leap in testing her own talent, and attempt to do a portrait of her own likeness.

Intrigued with the prospect of this , the young novitiate set up her canvass in the studio at Foley Hall, and began to carefully paint herself while looking at her reflection in a highly-polished mirror. She began the work in earnest, but, as she proceeded, she could see that, without a doubt, it would reflect an excellence hitherto unknown in many of her portraits. It might, she conceded to her fellow nuns, be her finest work.

Of course, it may have been the sin of pride that proved her fatal undoing. For, even though she had adequately filled in the entire canvass with detailed precision, she found herself, somehow, unaccountably blocked as it came time to finish the most important part of any portrait--the face. She lapsed into a kind of nervous lethargy, unsure of her ability to capture the essential spark of life that is the essence of any painted image. She gave herself a short respite from her efforts, but it proved to be, altogether, the wrong thing to do.

Possibly through the sheer strain of her efforts, (which found her, incidentally, working by gaslight all night and literally falling

asleep over her work at times) the young nun fell ill , dying only several days later . Perhaps this was the result of an epidemic, a not uncommon occurrence in the late Victorian Era, or maybe it was just sheer exhaustion, but, whatever the case, the self-portrait stood as her uncompleted final piece. In time, it was taken from the art studio of Foley Hall, put into a storage closet, and forgotten.

What came next, however, was truly interesting, as the legend of a strange, "faceless" nun began to circulate among the students who walked through the darkened passages of Foley Hall, stories that could not be easily dismissed. Whether or not the legend came first, or if it was the strange encounters that actually led to the weaving of the familiar tale, no one can now say. What is undeniable, however, is the presence of the Faceless Nun, who walked the dim hallways of Foley Hall, a forlorn reminder of a life and incredible talent cut short before they even bloomed.

The best anecdotes concerning the Faceless Nun came from none other than a fellow Sister and teacher at St. Mary's , the art professor Sister Esther, who before her death related some of the following anecdotes and history of the Faceless Nun to a local reporter.

Although Foley Hall had always had an aura about it that seemed to invite suspicions of the ghostly, it was not until one night, while Sister Esther was working late on a particularly pressing project, that she became aware of a presence in the room with her. Feeling uneasy, she went outside of her own room, going down the hall to an adjacent studio, where she saw a young woman standing outside the door, looking disturbed.

"Whatever could be the matter?" asked Sister Esther, noting the strange , nervous look on the young student's face.

The girl looked at her strangely, and then said, "It's that young Sister. She has been in and out of the room all night, yet every time I speak to her she says nothing. And I can never seem to get a look at her face."

Surprised, Sister Esther went into the room to investigate, but

found nothing. The description of the young nun matched no one that Sister Esther had ever heard of before, but she was alarmed to say the least. It was only a short time later, however, that the faceless young sister began to make more frequent appearances at the school.

One day, Sister Esther was lecturing in her class when, as she was standing in front of a student's desk, she was surprised to see the girl lift her head, say something over her shoulder, and then jerk her head about as if surprised.

The girl said, "Are you everywhere? You were just standing beside me, weren't you?"

As odd as this particular happening was, it paled in comparison to the night that Sister Esther was called down to the art studio by a disturbed young student. As the young woman stood at the canvas, she stated emphatically that, "There is someone else in the room with us. She is over in the corner. She is dressed like one of the old time Sisters, and I can't seem to get a look at her face."

Sister Esther stood there, incredulously, as the student described the strange, mournful figure in black. Sister Esther learned later that the student was , generally, considered to be a "sensitive" that could see and feel many things that ordinary people could not.

She continued to describe the strange form that she saw, even beginning to sketch it, as the invisible phantom walked over to an old closet, and dissolved into the doorway. Sister Esther realized, suddenly, that the room was freezing.

Disturbing accounts of the Faceless Nun continued to come from a variety of students, so many, in fact, that Foley Hall became a place on campus to consciously avoid. Most students refused to be inside the hall at night, and those that were forced to , for whatever reason, often found themselves inventing excuses to not linger in the place as the sun began to dip below the trees. Many students would, in time , come to assert that they, too, had occasion to run into the Faceless Nun, and many complained of

the eerie feelings and icy cold sensations of gloom that Foley Hall gave them.

It was a short time later that Sister Esther went to her superiors, and a special Mass was commenced, ostensibly to quiet the restless ghost of the Faceless Nun. Though this seems to have had some positive impact, it didn't squelch the weird phenomena completely, and students from time to time still reported seeing the alarming image of a weeping nun , whose face seems always to somehow elude the observations of the witness.

It was several years later that Foley Hall was torn down. Whither went the spirit of the Faceless Nun, no one can say , but we can well imagine that that tormented soul lives on, in some capacity. Perhaps she still wanders the lonely grounds, looking out from beneath a dark hood, with eyes that see everything and nothing, all at once.

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